

VZCZCXRO1836
PP RUEHPT
DE RUCNDT #0082/01 0341532
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 031532Z FEB 09
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5751
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2176
RUEHSB/AMEMBASSY HARARE 0151
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0888
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0439
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2866
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE 0001
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH 0001
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 0022
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0756
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3517

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000082

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNDP](#) [KGHG](#) [PARM](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [AS](#) [XV](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S MEETING WITH AUSTRALIAN PERMREP
HILL

Classified By: U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR
REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In a February 2 introductory call on Australian PermRep Hill, Ambassador Rice reviewed her top priorities and solicited close partnership with the Australian Mission. Ambassador Hill shared views on candidates to replace the UNDP Administrator, worried that the ultimate decision could influence an Australian candidacy for another senior UN vacancy. He sees the U.S. and China as being key to a successful outcome of climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December. While Australia is taking a higher development assistance profile in Africa and international role in nuclear nonproliferation, they are keen to find ways to limit Fiji's role in future UN peacekeeping operations until that Pacific nation restores democratic governance. End summary.

¶2. (C) UNDP SUCCESSION. Warmly welcoming Ambassador Rice during a February 2 meeting at his mission, Australian PermRep Ambassador Robert Hill said a retiring senior Australian army officer, formerly head of Special Forces, is a short-list candidate for the vacant position of UN Under Secretary-General for Safety and Security. But Hill worried that the likelihood of an Australian winning the job could be greatly compromised if former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark gets selected to fill another top vacancy as Administrator of the UN Development Program (UNDP). Ambassador Rice acknowledged Helen Clark's qualifications, but noted that the USG had recently provided the Secretary-General (SYG) with a strong short-list of potential AmCit candidates. Amb. Rice also noted that there were a number of well-qualified developing country potential candidates who could merit serious consideration. Speculating about other possible UNDP candidates, Ambassador Hill opined that UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Hilde Johnson (Norway) has been in her current position for too short a period to get strong consideration. Hill noted that Australia highly values the UNDP and credits the agency with improving its coordination both with other UN entities as well as with other major donors and international financial institutions. He foresees UNDP possibly playing a greater role in coming years pending anticipated reform of the global financial architecture.

¶3. (SBU) AFRICA/FOOD SECURITY. Ambassador Hill gave high marks to Australian-U.S. cooperation at the UN, which Amb. Rice pledged to build upon. He singled out successes in reforming the UN's human resources system as well as the UN's administration of justice as big achievements in bilateral efforts. Ambassador Rice reviewed some of her top priorities

concerning peacekeeping operations, climate change, nonproliferation, and development/poverty reduction. Ambassador Hill noted that Australia was branching beyond its traditional focus on the Pacific region by recent development initiatives in Africa, driven in part by Australia's business and agricultural sectors. In the aftermath of the recent food crisis, the underlying causes of which remain unaddressed, Hill foresees the need to substantially rebuild Africa's agricultural economy. In Zimbabwe, Australia is poised to act quickly to aid the agricultural sector once conditions permit it.

¶4. (SBU) CLIMATE CHANGE, NONPROLIFERATION. Ambassador Hill observed that the U.S. and China will be the key determinants of a "worthwhile" outcome of the Copenhagen climate change conference of parties meeting in December. He sees big opportunities for the U.S. right now, and noted that Australia's top climate negotiator Penny Wong will be in Washington and then New York in late-March. Time is short between now and December, and it remains to be seen what role the SYG, the Major Economies Meeting and other processes might play in this span. Ambassador Rice noted that getting key climate legislation through Congress in such a short span is a tall order. Amb. Hill said Australia shares the Administration's priority on nuclear nonproliferation, noting that the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation co-chaired by Japan and Australia will have a meeting in Washington, DC, in March, followed by a visit by the co-chairs to New York in order to energize other PermReps on Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) activities.

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¶5. (C) UN PEACEKEEPING. Amb. Hill sees the UN's peacekeeping (PK) capabilities as "exhausted" at present, but sees few viable alternatives. He believes the UN needs to further develop partnership arrangements with national and regional organizations. He noted strong opposition within the UN to Australia's taking the lead in peacekeeping for Timor-Leste several years ago, but said the UN is now grateful not to have that added burden itself. Amb. Rice praised Australia's long record of valuable contributions to UN peace operations.

¶6. (C) FIJI CONCERNS. Hill said Australia is deeply concerned that coup-prone Fiji seems to be settling in to an unprecedentedly extended period of military dictatorship. Acknowledging USG concerns about preserving Fijian military presence in Iraq, Hill wondered whether it is not possible to effectively block Fiji from acquiring any new PK duties from the UN until it is restored to democratic governance. The Australian acknowledged that there is no precedence for this, and that both SYG Ban and Department of Political Affairs U/SYG Pascoe are leery of creating such new conditionality. But Hill noted that few states' militaries are as dependent upon UN PK roles for revenue and prestige as are Fiji's (and Pakistan's), and therefore thinks a public commitment by SYG Ban would be wholly appropriate. Ambassador Rice opined that the UN might have better political coverage for such a decision were it invited to do so by a regional organization, such as the Pacific Island Forum. Ambassador Hill welcomed the idea and agreed to look into it.
Rice